



## DECIPHERING NUTRITION LABELS

Adopting healthy eating habits doesn't happen overnight, but learning to decode nutrition labels is a giant step in the right direction. Food labels can seem deceiving, but in reality, all of the information you need to help you make an informed, healthy decision when grocery shopping is right there on the label.

### **NUTRITION FACTS LABEL:**

The serving size information is listed at the top of the Nutrition Facts label. Two things you should immediately note are the serving size and the number of servings. Serving size tells you a one-serving measurement, which applies to the rest of the nutritional information on the label.

Note: sometimes serving sizes can be deceiving. Remember that the serving is calculated based solely on that one product. So when preparing a meal that requires you add liquid, keep in mind that the serving is the measurement BEFORE an additional liquids are added. On the other hand, the number of servings lets you know how many total servings are in the product. If you are likely to consume more than one serving, you must double or triple all of the listed measurements.

The Nutrition Facts label also contains information about calories, fat content, sodium, amount and types of carbohydrates, and amount of protein in the product. The label shows the amounts in grams (g) or milligrams (mg). It also shows the percentage of the daily value (the amount you need every day) for each of these nutrients. The daily value information is based on a 2,000 calorie per day diet. So it won't exactly be right for everybody.

The bottom portion of the Nutrition Facts label shows the vitamin and mineral content of the product. The FDA requires that information on calcium, iron, vitamin A, and vitamin C be included on the label. Sometimes the food manufacturers add information about other vitamins if the product contains significant amounts of those nutrients.

### **INGREDIENTS:**

Below the Nutrition Facts label, each product lists its ingredients. They are listed from largest to smallest in terms of quantity. This means that the product contains the largest amount of the first ingredient listed and the smallest amount of the last ingredient.

### **LABEL CLAIMS:**

Some food labels make claims such as "Low Cholesterol" or "Calorie Free." These claims can only be used if the product meets strict government definitions. Consult the chart below when you spot a label claim.

#### **LABEL CLAIM**

Fat-free or Sugar-Free  
Low Fat  
Reduced Fat or Reduced Sugar  
Cholesterol Free  
Reduced Cholesterol  
Calorie Free  
Low Calorie  
Light or Lite  
Saturated Fat Free  
Low Saturated Fat

#### **DEFINITION (per standard serving size)**

Less than 0.5 grams of fat or sugar  
3 grams of fat or less  
At least 25% less fat or sugar  
Less than 2 milligrams of cholesterol and 2 grams or less of saturated fat  
At least 25% less cholesterol and 2 grams or less of saturated fat  
Less than 5 calories per serving  
40 calories or less per serving  
1/3 fewer calories or 50% less fat  
Less than 1/2 gram of saturated fat per serving  
Less than 1 gram of saturated fat per serving

**DON'T FORGET TO STRETCH!**